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A

S E R M O N

Preach'd at the Parish Church of

St. *Laurence-jewry*,

L O N D O N.

O C T O B E R 5, 1708.

By *ROBERT MOSS*, D. D. Chaplain in
Ordinary to Her M A J E S T Y, and Preacher
to the Honourable Society of *Grays-Inn*.

Publish'd at the Desire of the Vestry.

L O N D O N:

Printed for *Richard Sare* at *Gray's-Inn* Gate in
Holborn; and *Jacob Tonson* at *Gray's-Inn* Gate
next *Gray's-Inn* Lane. 1708.

*At a Vestry held this 7th Day of October, 1708.
by the Parishioners of the United Parishes of St.
Laurence-Jewry and St. Mary Magdalen, Milk-
Street, London,*

IT is Ordered, That the Church-Wardens, with
several of the Parishioners, do attend the Reve-
rend Dr. *Moss*, and give him Thanks for his Ser-
mon, Preach'd in this Parish the Fifth of this
Month : And that he be desired to Print the same.



To the Church-Wardens and
Parishioners of St. *Laurence-
fewry*, and St. *Mary Mag-
dalen, Milk-street.*

Gentlemen,

T HIS Sermon (*the first I Preach'd
before You as Your Tuesday-Le-
cturer*) I give up purely to your Impor-
tunity, who, without my seeking or de-
siring, have Chosen me (*tho' far une-
qual*) to stand in the Place, which the
Eminent Dean of Canterbury has fill'd
for some Years, with so much deserved
Applause. And I was the rather in-
duc'd to consent to this Publication, be-
cause it will at once testifie to the World
your kind Approbation of a plain Dis-
course

DEDICATION.

course upon a Subject not so very Popular, and your just Dislike of Principles certainly most Pernicious. I Hope too it will be allowed to pass for some small Testimony, how justly your Favours are Valued, and how thankfully Accepted, by,

Gentlemen,

Your most Faithful Servant,

Robert Moss

2 Cor. IV. v.

*For we Preach not our selves, but Christ
Jesus the Lord; and our selves your
Servants for Jesus Sake.*

ST. Paul, in the foregoing Part of this Epistle, takes Occasion to assert his own Authority, and to set forth the Dignity of his Office, and the Success of his Ministry, and his Fidelity and Sincerity in the Exercise of it, in Opposition to certain corrupt Teachers and crafty Walkers, who, in order to make the more gainful Merchandize of the Gospel, had Adulterated it, as it should seem, with base Mixtures of their own, contrary both to sound Doctrine and good Manners.

But our Apostle, that he might sufficiently distinguish himself from these Seducers, openly renounces the hidden Things of Dishonesty, and disclaims all Dominion over the Faith of his *Corinthian* Converts: And tho' he was Call'd, Inspir'd, and Assisted by God in a most extraordinary manner, yet he frankly Declares to them the Nature, Extent, and Design of his Commission, in
these

these condescending Words, — *We Preach not our selves*, &c. As if he should have said, (in the Name of himself and the rest of his Colleagues) “ We do not set up our selves as the
 “ Authors of your Faith, or your absolute Gover-
 “ nors and Directors: We derive our Power from
 “ Christ Jesus the Lord, to whom all Angels, Au-
 “ thorities and Powers are made Subject : *Him*
 “ and *His* Doctrine we Preach unto you; and the
 “ End and Intent of all our Ministrations is to be
 “ Helpful and Serviceable to you in the Things
 “ that Concern your Everlasting Salvation : This
 “ is the Work that our great Master hath given us
 “ to do, and which we diligently attend upon, in
 “ Obedience to his Commands, and in Charity to
 “ your Souls.

And, abating for the Disparity that is always to be suppos'd between an inspir'd Apostle and an ordinary Pastor or Teacher, we have herein a succinct Account of the Ministerial Function, as 'tis exercis'd by such as are lawfully call'd thereunto : Of the Commission by which they are Impower'd; of the Instructions wherewith they are furnish'd; of the Nature of their Employment, and the Duty incumbent upon them.

Which three Heads therefore I shall resolve into so many Propositions, fairly Deducible from my Text, *viz.*

I. That

I. That the Commission of the present Ministers and Preachers of the Gospel, is from *Christ Jesus the Lord*: They *Preach not themselves*, nor of themselves, but by Vertue of his Authority.

II. That their Instructions are likewise from *Christ Jesus the Lord*: They are not to *Preach themselves*, not their own Notions and Opinions, but *Him*, and his Blessed Gospel. And

III. That the Nature of their Employment is to serve the Necessities of the Flock, and to help forward their eternal Salvation.

For we Preach not our selves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and our selves your Servants for Jesus sake.

These three Propositions I shall endeavour to Illustrate and Confirm, and to Improve by some useful Inferences. And I am to shew,

I. That the Commission of the present Ministers and Preachers of the Gospel is from *Christ Jesus the Lord*: They *Preach not themselves*, nor of themselves, but by Vertue of his Authority.

It is true, that no Man, whatsoever some Enthusiasts may perswade themselves, can with any Truth or Modesty pretend to have receiv'd an immediate Commission from the Lord Christ, as had the first Twelve Apostles, and the Seventy Disciples, or St. *Paul*, whose Conversion and Call was more remarkable than any of the Apostles. But yet it is evident, from the Tenour of that original Commission which our Saviour gave to the Twelve, and the extensive Promise thereunto annex'd, that he from the first Design'd and Ordain'd a perpetual Succession of Ministers, to be constantly preserv'd by his Providence, and supported by his special Presence and Power; and to be assisted, if not with the extraordinary, yet with all ordinary and necessary Gifts and Graces of his good Spirit, to fit them for the Work to which they were appointed.

This the bare Recital of the Words us'd by our Lord on that memorable Occasion will prove, I think, decisively. *As my Father hath sent me, so send I you*, says he, *Jo. 20. 21.* Which pregnant Words can admit of no other fair Construction but this, *viz.* That as he himself was sanctify'd, and set apart by God's peculiar Designation, as that great Prophet who was to be sent into the World, to declare the Will of his Heavenly Father; so did he also sanctifie and separate the Apostles,

stles, as his special Delegates to prophesie in his Name, and *preach the Gospel* (by him reveal'd) to every Creature.

And of what Extent and Duration this their Commission was design'd to be, that other celebrated Passage, *Matth. 28. 19, 20.* will fully evince. *Go ye therefore and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: And lo, I am with you always, even unto the End of the World. Amen. — Even unto the End of the World. —* And yet the Apostles were Themselves Mortal, and Short-liv'd as other Mortals; and therefore the Promise must of necessity extend to their Successors, to Those who should be delegated by them to the same Charge which They had receiv'd from Christ, and so on successively *εὗς τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος, i. e.* 'till the Consummation of all Things, as *Grotius* and *Hammond*, and with them all Interpreters truly Learned and Pious, understand that Expression in this place.

And This Interpretation is both natural and easie, and solid and well-grounded: For the word *αἰὼν*, which we translate *World*, may perhaps more strictly signifie an Age. But it is us'd for the most part in the *New Testament*, not for the Age of a Man, nor for One Hundred Years (commonly

reckon'd an Age or Generation) but for an Age of the World, or some eminent Period or Division of Time therein. And Two such Periods there were, much mention'd and fam'd among the *Jews*, viz. the Age and State precedent and preparatory to the Messiah, and the Age and State under the Administration of the Messiah. The Age preparatory to the Messiah was now concluded, and the Kingdom of the Messiah actually commenc'd upon our Lord's Resurrection; *all Power* being then *given* him (and he assumes it to himself, *v. 18.*) *in Heaven and in Earth*. And the first Exercise of this Power was the Commission that he gave to his Apostles in the words following: In executing which Commission, he hath promised to second and support them (after his Ascent into Heaven) by the special Presence and Assistance of his Spirit, *πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον*, continually to the End of the Age. And This being the last Age, there being no other State to succeed this, Christ's Promise can have no other Period to determine it but the End of the World; and consequently the Power now personally invested in the Apostles, and the special Assistance promised to them, must of course descend upon their Successors, and be uninterruptedly continued to the World's End, in order to the completion of the Promise. This, I take it, is the Ground upon which this Interpretation is built,
and

and it is too firm to be shaken by all the vain Attempts of that gain-saying Generation of Men, who employ all their Art, all their Engines, to pull down ancient Truth, and every thing else Established.

But to proceed. In confirmation of the same Doctrine, *St. Paul* informs us, *Ephes. 4. 11, 12.* That Christ gave some Apostles, some Evangelists, some Pastors and Teachers: And to what end? For the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ.

Which end could not be effectually answered, unless a constant Succession of Ministers had been included in the first Grant and Donation. For there was need from the beginning (besides the business of Discipline and Government) there was need, I say, of able Guides and Instructors, to confirm those who had been converted by the Apostles, to administer the Sacraments duly to them, to feed them with the sincere Milk of the Word, and to improve them still more and more in Christian Knowledge and Practice.

And *This* being a Need that will always attend the Church of God, during its Militant State here upon Earth, it is highly reasonable to suppose that there was a suitable Provision made for it by the wise Founder thereof: And it were extreamly unreasonable indeed to interpret the Scriptures already

produc'd, or Any else that look with the same Aspect, to a contrary Sense and Meaning.

Especially since the Practice of the Apostles themselves, whilst They liv'd and presided over the Church, is so plain an Interpreter of Christ's own Mind and Will in this particular. For we find in express Scripture, that They did, with Prayer and by Imposition of Hands, set apart certain Persons for the Ministry; and empower'd and directed those Persons in like manner to Ordain Others, that so there might be a constant supply of Men duly qualify'd, both to Rule and Feed the Flock of Christ.

And This regular Mission and Succession has been continued down to this very day, the chief Governing and Ordaining Part being reserv'd, according to the Apostolical Pattern, to Bishops in peculiar, and the Dispensing of the Word and Sacraments being committed to Presbyters, in subordination to their Bishops.

And in this very Manner, and according to this very Rule, are the Ministers of this Church at present (and of all Churches rightly constituted) ordain'd and dedicated to the Ministry: And They apparently derive the spiritual Power, with which they are invested, from the original Fountain of all Power, and by the proper Conveyance that was at first appointed; that is to say, by the Hands of
Those

Those to whom it hath been handed down thro' a Series of Seventeen Centuries from the Apostles, who received it immediately from Christ himself.

Let me only add here, that as They receive their Commission from Christ, so They are Honour'd with a peculiar Relation to him, and may, in their Proportion, lay claim to the same Stile and Title, that the Apostles so frequently assume to themselves, of being *Ministers of God, Ministers of Jesus Christ, Ministers of the New Testament, and of the Gospel, Ambassadors for Christ, Stewards of God, of the Mysteries of God, of the manifold Grace of God*, and the like. I say these honourable Appellations do in a Proportion belong to Them, because they are employ'd in that which was the ordinary Work and Office of the Apostles, tho' not endow'd with those extraordinary and miraculous Gifts, which the Exigency of Things made necessary in the Infancy of the Church, but not so necessary to be continued in After-times, when It had gathered Strength, and gain'd a firm Establishment in the World.

And this, I hope, may suffice to illustrate and confirm the Truth of my first Proposition, *viz.* That the present Ministers and Preachers of the Gospel have their Commission from Christ Jesus the Lord: They *preach not themselves*, nor of themselves, but by vertue of his Authority. And
This

23.

Gr.

20.
38.

This is a Truth that, I dare presume to Prophe-
sie, will stand and fall with the Gospel it self.

And yet after all I will not dissemble, that it hath
been boldly asserted of late, by a more disingenu-
ous Caviller perhaps, and a more scurrilous Scof-
fer than ever was *Julian* the Apostate, that That
Promise of our Lord's, *Lo, I am with you always*
&c, Ample and Extensive as it may seem, can with

Vid. *The Rights*
of the Christian
Church, p. 163,
164.

no colour of Reason be extended farther than to
the Persons of the Apostles, and the Time they
were to live: Or, if we will needs have it extend-
ed to After-ages, that it is gross Partiality to con-
fine it to the Clergy, Exclusive of the *Church*, or
Body of Christians: Or lastly, supposing the
Promise to be made only to the Clergy, that it
infers no Right in the Apostles, of communicating
the Power they had receiv'd to their Successors af-
ter them, for the Support and good Government
of the Christian Church.

In direct Confutation of which wretched Ca-
vils, I would undertake to prove, (would the time
admit) that the Promise must of necessity extend
farther than to the Persons and Age of the Apo-
stles; both because it was a Work of longer Time
that They were employ'd about, and because in
Fact the Work was not compleatly finished by the
Apostles, in their own Persons, or their own Times.
I would prove farther, that the Commission was
directly

[II]

directly given, and the Promise made to the Clergy, (as Successors to the Apostles) Separate from, and Exclusive of all others : I would prove lastly, that the Promise must of necessity include a Right in the Apostles, of delegating a competent Authority to their Successors after them, both to Rule and Feed Christ's Flock ; and that both because They did actually take upon them to communicate such a Power, (in which it cannot be imagin'd that they should go beyond their Commission) and because the Nature and State of Things, as well as the Tenour of the Promise, did absolutely so require. For the larger Proof of all which Particulars, I now make my self your Debtor against some other convenient Opportunity.

In the mean time, as I believe you to be All Christians, thoroughly so perswaded, and soberly minded and well dispos'd, so I doubt not but if you should happen to hear it asserted, in the prophane Strain of this Age, " That the Clark hath as good a Title to the Priesthood, as the Parson ;
 " that the Power of Consecrating the Elements,
 " which the Priest arrogates to himself, may de-
 " serve rather to be call'd *Conjuration* than *Con-*
 " *secration* ; that the Minister is the meer Creature
 " of the Magistrate, as the Magistrate is of the Peo-
 " ple, and to be made and unmade at Pleasure ;
 " that the civil Power is the sole Fountain
 " of

Vid. *The Rights of the Christian Church* Passim.

“ of all Ecclesiastical Power, and that the Mini-
 “ sters of Christ have no Power that is Internal
 “ and Spiritual, strictly so called : I say, I doubt
 not but you will reject These, and such like mon-
 strous Assertions, with the utmost Abhorrence,
 and resolve to have no *Fellowship* with such per-
 nicious *Works of Darknes*; as concluding that such
 an open Defiance of the Christian Religion, and
 such avowed Contradiction to some of its most
 Catholic and Fundamental Truths, is no other
 than a covert way of Undermining all Religion,
 and Introducing the wildest Libertinism, Deism, and
 (if it were possible) downright Atheism in the
 room of it.

II. I proceed now to my Second Head, *viz.*
 That the Instructions of the Ministers and Preach-
 ers of the Gospel, are likewise from *Christ Jesus*
the Lord: They are not to *Preach themselves*, not
 their own Notions or Opinions, but *Him* and *his*
 Blessed Gospel.

And this is pursuant to that original Com-
 mission which Christ gave to his Apostles, when
 he sent them to disciple all Nations; for he pre-
 scribes expressly what it was they were to Teach
 them, even *to observe all things whatsoever he had*
commanded them, Matth. 20. 21. So that their
 direct Charge was to deliver those very Precepts
 to the Jews and Gentiles, whom they were to con-
 vert,

vert, which They themselves had received from that infallible Teacher who sent them upon this Embassy. And indeed, Jesus Christ himself, and the mysterious Oeconomy of Man's Redemption by him accomplish'd, was the only *Foundation*, as St. Paul avows, that They, or any Man could lay, or safely build upon.

And accordingly we find that St. Peter, in his first Sermon (at which three thousand Souls were Converted) took Jesus of *Nazareth* for his Text, pronouncing him to be *a Man approved of God by Signs and Wonders*; and appealing to the Jews own Knowledge for the Truth of the matter; upbraiding them for being his Crucifiers; bearing Testimony to his Resurrection and Ascension; and ascribing the Effusion of the Holy Ghost to his Vertue and Power; and lastly, declaring him to be *both Christ and Lord*, the very Messiah, that the Jews so earnestly expected. Acts 2. 22, 23, 32, 33, 36.

And, at the next Opportunity, we find him repeating and confirming the same, and Preaching Repen- Acts 3. 13, &c.
tance and Remission of Sins in his Name; and asserting at another time, that *there is not Salvation in any other*; Acts 4. 12.
that there is none other Name under Heaven, given among Men, whereby we must be saved. And He and the Rest of the Apostles ceased not, we read, *in the Temple and in every House to Teach and Preach Jesus Christ*, Acts 5. 42.

And St. Paul, as soon as ever he was illuminated Himself, Proclaimed the same Doctrine both to the Jews and Gentiles: *Jesus the Son of God; Jesus, and Forgiveness of Sins through Him; Jesus and the Resurrection, &c.* Acts 9. 20. 13. 30. 38. And instead of all other Recommendations, he plainly tells the

1 Cor. 2. 2.

Corinthians, that he had determin'd to know nothing among them, save Jesus Christ and him Crucified.

This is the Sum and Substance of that Doctrine which the first Teachers of Christianity unanimously Advanced; These are the Instructions that they constantly pursu'd: And by the same the Ministers of the Gospel at this Day are certainly bound up, by the same They ought always to be directed.

They are not, They must not think themselves at Liberty, to preach their own darling Opinions, or curious Speculations, or useless Inventions; much less their own Prejudices, Passions, or Errors, for the Sacred Oracles of God: But they are oblig'd to bring every thing that they adventure to propose to the Standard of the Gospel, and to build Nothing that is a Superstructure of their own, beside the only true *Foundation*, which is Christ.

They ought to preach the Incarnation, Life, Death, Resurrection, and Exaltation of the Son of God; together with the Necessity and Sufficiency of that Satisfaction which he made upon the Cross, for the Sins of the whole World.

They ought to preach that Faith and Repentance, which he hath been pleas'd to make the Gospel Conditions of Salvation; and that Remission of Sins and Justification by God's free Grace, which is the precious Gospel Privilege.

They ought to preach the Aid and Efficacy of the Holy Spirit, as necessary to prevent and further us in all that we think or do; and that *Life and Immortality*, which Christ brought to Light through the Gospel, as the great Encouragement

couragement to all our honest and pious Endeavours.

And They ought, in preaching, to shew the vast Moment and Importance of all these Gospel Truths, and the powerful Influence, that, if rightly consider'd and apply'd, they would have upon Mens Lives and Manners.

And They ought also, upon this Foundation, to preach good sound Morality; not as 'tis lamely and coldly Taught in the Schools of the Philosophers, but as 'tis more perfectly Compriz'd, and Refin'd from all Adulterations and Corruptions, in Christ's admirable Sermon upon the Mount, and Commented upon and Explained in St. Paul's Epistles, and other the Canonical Writings.

This Christian Morality, I say, the Ministers of the Gospel ought to preach and inculcate, deriving its Obligation from the Authority of our supream *Law-giver*, *who is able to save and to destroy*; placing its Essence (where it ought to be) in a principle of Love and Duty towards God; fixing the Measures of it by the exactest Standard, the Precepts and Example of Christ; resolving the Power of it into the Efficiency of Divine Grace; and lastly, enforcing the Practice of it by the mighty Motive of eternal Rewards and Punishments.

And when the Ministers of God do thus faithfully propose any part or point of the Christian Religion, whether Doctrinal or Moral, and support what they have to offer, by Proofs immediately fetch'd from Scripture, or by other Arguments well consisting with Scripture, and the Analogy of Faith; I say, in so doing, they act in pursuance of their proper Instructions, *and preach not themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord*. And in particular,

when They press the Practice of any Thing that is morally Good, (or dissuade the contrary) upon the Principles and Motives above mentioned, then do they preach true Divinity and Christianity, then also *do they preach Christ Jesus the Lord.*

vid. Arch-
shop Tillot-
son's Sermon
against Evil
Speaking.

For tho' it may possibly be said (as a most Reverend Person, whose Name is famous here, and wherever else the *English* Tongue is known and understood, once watchfully objected to himself) "This is all mere Morality, there is not one word of Jesus Christ in it; yet (as that great Prelate and Preacher justly retorted) "it is Scripture Morality, It is Christian Morality; and "I hope that Jesus Christ is truly Preach'd, whenever "his Will, and Laws, and the Duties injoyn'd by the "Christian Religion, are inculcated upon Us.

Whenever therefore we preach up Humility, Meekness, Purity, Peaceableness, Justice, Charity, Prudence, Patience, Godly Sincerity, Veracity, Candor, Courtesie, and the like; then it must in all Reason be allow'd, that *we preach Jesus Christ*, because we preach up those Virtues and Graces, that were most conspicuous in Him our great Exemplar, that are most earnestly recommended in the New Testament, and that are highly ornamental to a Christian's Life.

On the other hand, when we preach against Pride, Peevishness, Strife, Envy, Sedition, Schism, Injustice, Unmercifulness, Intemperance, Uncleaness, Hypocrisie, Dissimulation, Censoriousness, Uncharitableness, or the like; then also it must not be denied but that *we preach Jesus Christ*, because we preach against those Sins, against which

which he himself has more particularly revealed the Wrath of God from Heaven.

In sum, to *preach Christ Jesus the Lord*, is to deliver the *Truth as it is in Jesus*, it is to speak plainly as the Oracles of God direct, upon all useful Subjects Divine and Moral, without wresting or warping our Comments upon Scripture, or Deductions from Scripture, by way of Accommodation to Times and Seasons, to particular Events and Occurrences, to fashionable Opinions, to prevailing Errors, to Interest or Policy, or any other sinister View whatsoever.

And by this time it is hoped, that I may have said enough to Clear and Establish my second Proposition, to wit, That the Ministers and Preachers of the Gospel receive their Instructions from *Christ Jesus the Lord*: That *they are not to preach themselves*, not their own Notions or Opinions, but *him and his* Blessed Gospel: And I have also shewn, when and how They may be said to acquit themselves, pursuant to the Instructions They have receiv'd. I hasten now,

III. To my third and last Proposition, *viz.* That the Nature of their Employment is to serve the Necessities of the Flock, and to help forward their Eternal Salvation. *We preach not our selves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and our selves your Servants for Jesus sake.* Which latter Clause, I think, is evidently to be Interpreted of his being serviceable to them in their spiritual Concerns, and in the grand Affair of their Salvation: because it is absurd to suppose that the Office of an Apostle, as such, should imply any Thing of Servility; or that *St. Paul*, whilst he disclaims any direct

rect Dominion over the *Corinthians* Faith, should profess a direct Subjection to them, even in the Administration of his Office; or that he should be, in a strict Sense, and in a proper Relation, a Servant to Them, whom he elsewhere calls his Sons, and asserts his paternal Authority over them, as having *begotten them thro' the Gospel*. 1 Cor. 4. 15.

Besides, tis apparent enough, that the Apostolical Function, as such, did imply an eminent and immediate Relation to God; upon which account it is, that St. Paul styles himself, in the Entrance of his Epistle to the *Romans*, *Paul the Servant of Jesus Christ*: And why? because he was *call'd to be an Apostle, and separated to the Gospel of God*.

And, for the same Reason, he calls *Epaphras*, Colos. 1. 7. *his dear fellow-servant, who* (adds he) *is for you a faithful Minister of Christ*. Christ's Minister he properly was, tho' his Ministration was for the behoof and benefit of the *Colossians*, whom, by a Delegation from St. Paul, he had visited and converted. And, in the same sense, St. Paul here presents himself and Brethren as the *Corinthians* Servants for Jesus sake; that is, as ministering to their spiritual and eternal Good, by the Mission and Appointment of Jesus Christ: And They might aptly enough call themselves Servants, in respect of the Laboriousness and Difficulty of their Task, tho' not upon the account of any servile relation that they bore to the Persons whom they freely ministered to. For even the Angels themselves are call'd *ministering Spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be Heirs of Salvation*: And yet it would be incongruous to infer from thence, that they are in Station or Condition servilely subject to mortal Men. And

And as the Office of the Apostles was, in its first Source, exempt from all Servility, so the Power delegated by Them to Others was free from any such Clog or Incumbrance: For St. Paul, we find, gives a solemn Charge to his Son *Timothy*, to *reprove, rebuke, exhort with all* Tim. 4. 2. *Long-suffering and Doctrine*, i. e. where there was any hope of working upon ingenuous Tempers by the spirit of Meekness: But the Charge to *Titus* runs higher, *These* Tit. 2. 15. *things speak and exhort, and rebuke with all Authority; let no Man despise thee.* He is directed to act boldly, as in the Name of God, that he might not incur the Contempt of Men that were dispos'd to be refractory and disobedient.

And it must in reason be presumed, that even the Office of the Ordinary standing Pastors of the Church includes nothing in it so Base and Mean, as to make it the Object of Contempt. For, were it so, the Institution it self would be in vain, since the Nature of Mankind is such, that they will not easily be influenced or guided by those, whom they look down upon with Scorn and Disdain: From whence, by the by, it appears, how very disserviceable it must needs be to Religion in general, to have the Ministers of it made cheap and despicable in the Eyes of the People; which, as some observing Men are apt to think, is not so openly and industriously done in any Country, that is either Christian or Civil, as it is in this of Ours, which is Protestant and Reformed.

The Occasion of which Complaint is chiefly owing to the licentious Pens of this Age, who, as they are very free to tax the Christian Clergy, as if they deriv'd some of their most venerable Mysteries, and most Important Powers from the Heathen Priests; so (to do 'em Justice) they.

History of Religion: Rights of the Christian Church, &c.

they are far enough from copying after the Heathen Laity, in that profound Regard which generally they paid to the Priests of *Jupiter*, the *Mother* of the Gods, or other their Fictitious Deities.

In the mean time, there can be nothing in the Function of the Christian Priesthood it self, that should render it Contemptible, but quite the contrary. For to be the Ministers of God, is an Honourable Relation; to wait at his Altar is an Honourable Attendance; to be the Dispensers of his Word and Sacraments, is a high Trust; to have the Care and Guidance of his Flock, is a weighty Charge, that requires no mean Sufficiency.

And what is it, after all these Honours, that should sink the Ministers Character so very low in vulgar Opinion? Is it, that they owe a Service to the People, with the Care of whom they are Intrusted? But in this they are still the Servants of God, under the *Great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls*. And the Service that they owe is of a Spiritual kind, suited to the several Exigencies of their Flock, over whom they ought to be continually watching for Good, and to Administer to all their Necessities, as the special Case shall happen to require. Their Business is, in a word, with all Patience to Instruct the Ignorant, with all Meekness to Admonish and Exhort the Knowing, with all Carefulness to confirm the Wavering, with all Caution to direct the Doubtful, with all Compassion to comfort the Afflicted, and to restore the Desponding; with all Earnestness to excite the Lazy, and to awaken the Secure, with all long Suffering to recall the Erroneous, and with all Authority to correct the Scandalous, and to menace the Presumptuous.

This is the Nature of the Ministers Employment, These are some of the chief Branches of their Duty; in discharging
of

of which, They are willing to be the Servants of Men, in Obedience to God's Holy Ordinance, and in order to bring them to Heaven and Happiness. *We Preach not our selves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and our selves your Servants for Jesus sake.* Accept, we beseech you, of this Service.

Hitherto, Beloved, you have heard me at large, concerning the Commission and Instructions of the Ministers and Preachers of the Gospel, together with the Nature of their Duty and Employment. If ye will suffer now a few Hints, concerning the respective Duty of the People that are their Hearers, towards *Them*, I'll do it very briefly, and only by way of Inference.

1. First then, if the Ministers of the Gospel do indeed derive their Commission from *Christ Jesus*, (which none but a Disciple of *Leviathan*, no sound Christian, to be sure, can deny) then certainly their Hearers are oblig'd to pay 'em all that Reverence and Regard, which is suitable to the Relation and Character that they bear.

I am apprehensive enough, (tho' not at all at this Time, or in this Place) that a Man generally perswades but little, when he goes about to plead for Respect to Himself and his own Order. And yet 'tis always allowed to be a thing both fitting and commendable, in Those that hold any Place or Trust under an Earthly Prince, to keep up the Dignity of their Commission, and to insist upon that Observance and Respect, especially in the Execution of their Office, which is Customary and Decent.

And sure it will be allow'd, by more than parity of Reason, that God's Ministers, the *Stewards of his Mysteries*, and *Ambassadors for Christ*, may justly expect to be rever'd and honour'd, for the sake of Him whose Commissioners they are; and for whose sake they are contented to be your

Servants in Spiritual Matters. They may, at least, of right demand and insist upon so much Deference and Regard, as may serve to prepare the Peoples Minds the better to receive the Message that they bring; so much, at least, as may add Weight to their Admonitions, Force to their Exhortations, and Edge to their Reprehensions, and preserve the Solemnity of all their Ministerial Acts and Offices.

2. If the Ministers of the Gospel do also receive their Instructions from *Christ Jesus the Lord*, if they are *not to preach themselves*, not their own Notions and Opinions, but *Him* and *his* blessed Gospel; it will follow, that when they do strictly pursue these their Instructions, when they do preach the Christian Faith, and Christian Morality, supported by Reasons directly fetch'd from Scripture, or such at least as are consonant to Scripture, then are the hearers obliged to receive what they hear, not *as the word of Men*, but, *as it is in truth, the Word of God*. For as the Ministers themselves are not warranted to obtrude their own Inventions or Speculations, much less their Prejudices, Passions and Errors for so many indubitable Oracles; so neither are the Hearers to be justified in rejecting or cavilling at such Doctrine as is Scriptural, Authentick, and unquestionably True, meerly because it happens not to square with some prejudicate Notions of their own, or with their darling Lusts or Interests, or with the Politician's Schemes, or the Intrigues of the Worldly-wise, or the doubling Practices of a Faction or Party, or perhaps because it touches upon too tender a part, and lays open some secret Ulcer in their Consciences. I say, these can never be sufficient Reasons for rejecting any Doctrine that is agreeable to Scripture; for tho' our Church does
allow

allow a Judgment of Discretion, yet 'tis not such a Judgment as is perfectly arbitrary: and the Authority of Scripture and Scriptural Truths, can never be suppos'd to depend ultimately upon the good liking of the Audience; who are permitted indeed (as it is fit they should) to *prove all things*, but are nevertheless oblig'd, at their Peril, to *hold fast that which is good*. In the mean time it is but a small thing in a sober Estimation to be *judged of Man's Judgment*; for the time will come when *we must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ*, and then the soundness of the Preacher's Doctrine, and of the Hearers Hearts, shall both be weigh'd in an impartial Balance.

3. If the Minister's Duty and Employment be to serve the Spiritual Necessities of the Flock, and to Minister to their Salvation, if the Service that they owe be of a Spiritual kind; then 'tis evident, That the People ought not to expect any carnal Compliances from them, such as are Base, Servile and Abject. In particular, it must never be expected, that They should suit their Doctrine to the Palate of a vitious Age; that they should *smooth their Tongues* (as the Prophet *Jeremy* speaks) and study to please, even at the expence of Truth; that They should strike in with popular Opinions, tho' never so erroneous; that They should palliate Vices that are fashionable and predominant; or that they should in any wise *handle the Word of God deceitfully*, so as to cherish People in their Ignorance, encourage them in their Follies, or harden them in their Sins. No: God forbid that the Pulpit should ever be debas'd to so vile a purpose! God forbid that Any One, who has the Honour to be call'd a Minister of the Gospel, should so far prostitute both his Office and his Conscience,

science, and at once betray the Honour of God, and the Safety of the Souls of whom he has the Care! I will not therefore entreat you, my beloved Brethren, I will rather suppose that you need not be entreated, not to add to the Difficulty and Toilsomeness of our Task, by such unreasonable Expectations; in which if you were gratified, it would prove as delusive and destructive to your selves, as it were every way unworthy of Us and our Vocation. I speak not This, as if I were under the least Apprehension, that any such culpable Compliance were expected here from me. The honourable Regard and generous Treatment that many excellent Persons, who have been *your Servants for Jesus sake*, have still found at your Hands, is the best Assurance to me, that You are indeed able to *endure sound Doctrine*. And the Manner in which you have called me (however unworthy) to this Office among you, was so very Decent, so extremely Obliging, that I cannot but persuade my self, that I shall always be heard Favourably and Candidly. I was only willing to give you an honest Specimen of that Plainness and Freedom of Speech, with which you are like to be entertain'd; and by which I hope to *recommend my self to every Man's Conscience in the Sight of God*.

Let us all therefore endeavour to follow the excellent Advice of St. Peter, 1 Ep. 2. 1. *and laying aside all Malice, and all Guile, and Hypocrisies, and Envy, and all evil Speakings, as New-born Babes desire the sincere Milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby*. So shall We have Comfort in our Ministry, and You shall reap the Benefit of it. And so Preaching, and so Practising, we trust, thro' God's Mercy, that neither We that are Preachers, nor You that are Hearers, shall finally become *Cast-aways*. Amen.

